

You Can Become a Household Partner in the Tennessee Pollution Prevention Program We Did!

By Donovan Grimwood

My wife, Jessica, and I moved to Antioch in the fall of 2005 and decided to become more active in our recycling efforts. This was the first step on the way to our being named the first Household Partners in the Tennessee Pollution Prevention Program, known as "TP3."

Here's the story of how this happened. I have been with the Office of Environmental Assistance's Small Business Environmental Assistance Program for over eight years. My wife works for Intrepid USA Healthcare Services as a home health care nurse. Both of us are interested in conservation and practice recycling as well as other conservation and energy-saving methods at home.



Donovan Grimwood recycles in Nashville.
Photo by Jessica Grimwood

When I first joined the Small Business Environmental Assistance Program, my primary task was to learn about energy conservation methods that could be taught to Tennessee businesses and to act as a contact point for any energy-related questions. This led me to begin practicing at home what I was teaching others at work. It also led me to consider other conservation practices that I could do on a small budget at my house. I began practicing recycling and other conservation measures while I was still living in Cookeville. But when we moved to Antioch, we decided to implement a home recycling program from the start. We joined the Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership program. The TP3 Program is one of the programs I always encourage people to join during Office of Environmental Assistance outreach activities. It only made sense for our household to be a part of the program as well.

There are four levels in the TP3 program: Prospect, Pledge, Partner, and Performer. To become a Prospect, the participant expresses interest in the program by submitting the signup form you can find on a visit the Web site www.tp3.org/. The member will receive a pledge card by mail.

To attain the Pledge Level, the member submits the pledge card, listing conservation activities in each of the five areas: clean air, energy conservation, hazardous chemicals (paints, bugs sprays, etc), land and water conservation, and solid waste reduction (reduction, reuse, and recycling). These activities can be those you currently practice or would like to practice.

To advance to the Partner Level, the member submits a pollution prevention plan with five projects and a project success story.

My wife and I planned our home recycling project and submitted their plan to the TP3 review committee. The plan was fairly simple. We got a few extra garbage cans to separate and store their recyclable materials; one can for each recyclable. We also set aside storage areas for the recyclables until we took them out to the recycling bins. When we filled the bins to a sufficient amount, we would take the recyclables to one of several collections centers around Nashville. We usually take them to the Kroger on Nolensville Road closest to our home.

As for measuring how much we were collecting, we simply used a bathroom scale, weighing ourselves first and then weighing ourselves holding the bag of recyclables. We kept track of the amounts on a chart on the refrigerator door.

Once our project was approved, we gathered data from the project and submitted the success story. After review once more by the committee, we were named the first Household Partners in the TP3 program.

This was one of the initial goals to our project. And even we were surprised by the reduced quantity of our household garbage and how it compared with our recyclables. In our home, we have approximately a 75 percent recycling rate.

As for getting out the message for methods of being conservation, my job with the Small Business

Environmental Assistance Program has that as a focus, in addition to the primary task of assisting small businesses with their environmental questions. Whenever the SBEAP gets a chance, in addition to helping a small business with their question, we also see if there are some other things we can suggest to them that will save them money and make their business a more environmentally friendly place.

I've also tried to make state employees aware of choices they have through using small messages on paycheck stubs. Most people likely overlook the messages, but if even a few notice them and think about them, then they've done their job.

And due to the recent achievement of Partner status in the TP3, I've turned it into a selling point to get others involved. I feel that if I am going to ask someone to join, then I need to already be active in that program. I don't want to ask someone to do something I am not willing to do myself. And the more people we get involved, the greater the overall difference that can be made. And it just spreads from there.

Recycling is possibly just the start of the success stories for our household. We don't want to stop at just the Partner level, though. My wife and I have hopes to eventually join notables such as Saturn and Centennial High School as a TP3 Performer, the highest level of the TP3 program.

Read more about the TP3 program by visiting the Web site www.tdec.net/ea/tp3.

For more information on recycling, see the Web site www.tdec.net/ea/publications.shtml#envirolinksrrr.

To find out more about Office of Environmental Assistance, and to see the first success story the Grimwood household submitted to the TP3, visit www.tdec.net/ea.

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